

Roxbury

during the

Siege of Boston

April 1775-March 1776



Historic Roxbury/Boston National Historical Park

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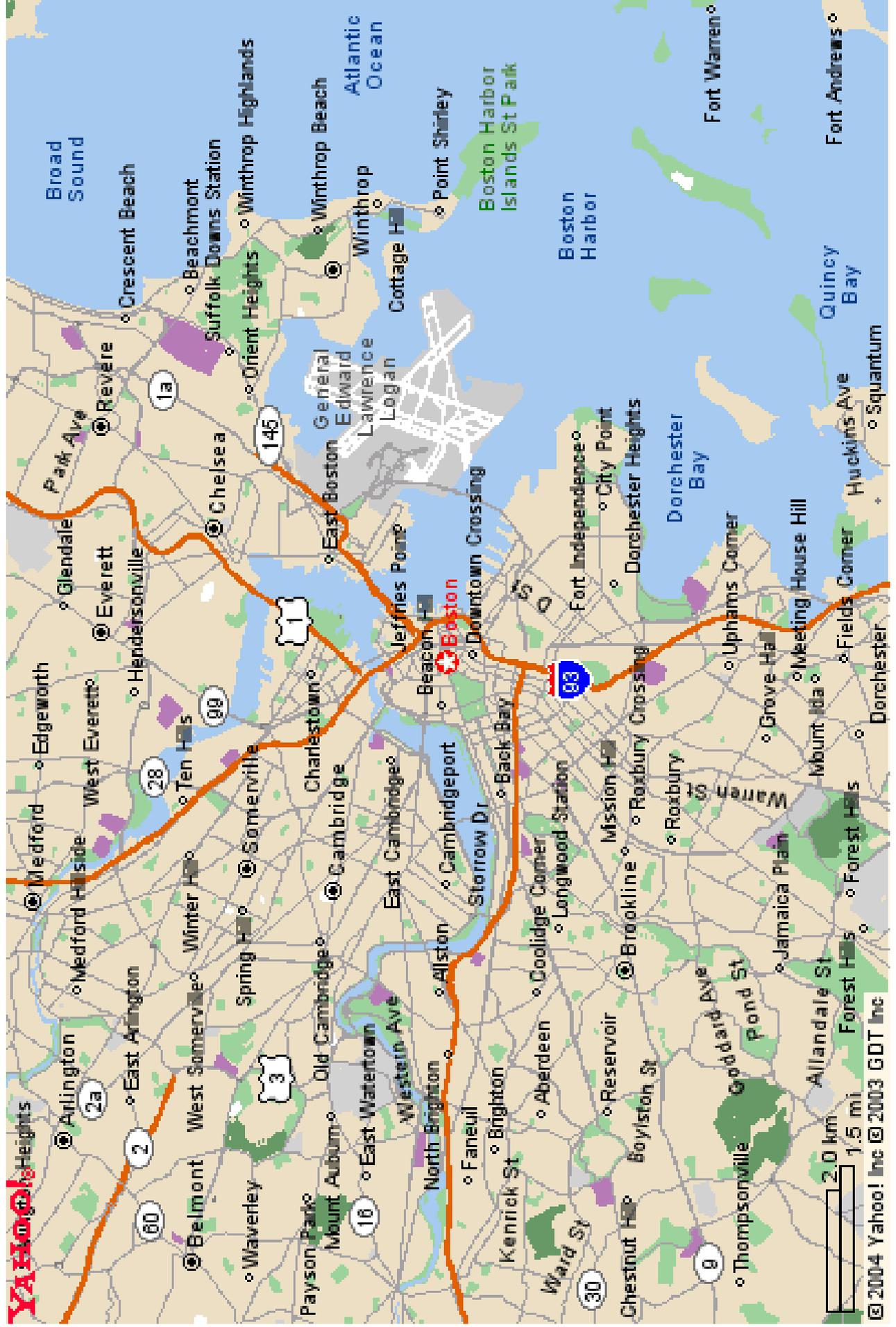
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Biographies of individuals relevant to this time period in Roxbury

Primary Source 1



Primary Source 3

Excerpts from a letter sent by Joseph Warren “To the Inhabitants of Great Britain,” April 26, 1775

Dr. Joseph Warren was the president of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, which met in Watertown April 22, 1775. The Congress gathered depositions—statements given under oath—from people who witnessed what happened on April 19. They wrote a letter to Benjamin Franklin, who was the colonial representative in London and this “Address.” They gave the letter, “Address,” and the depositions to Franklin on May 29, 1775. (See biographies to learn more about Dr. Warren, who was born in Roxbury.)

Friends and fellow-subjects: Hostilities are at length commenced in this colony by the troops under the command of General Gage; and it being of the greatest importance that an early, true, and authentic account of this inhuman proceeding, should be known to you, the Congress of this colony have transmitted the same and . . . think it proper to address you on the alarming occasion. . . .

Warren goes on to describe what happened on April 19, 1775. He continues:

To give the particular account of the ravages of the troops [the Regulars], as they retreated from Concord to Charlestown, would be very difficult. . . . Let it suffice to say, that a great number of the houses on the road were plundered, and rendered unfit for use; several were burnt; women in childbed were driven¹, by the soldiery, naked into the streets; old men peaceably in their houses were shot dead; and such scenes exhibited as would disgrace the annals of the most uncivilized nations.

These, brethren, are marks of ministerial² vengeance against this colony, for refusing, with her sister-colonies, a submission to slavery; but they have not yet detached us from our royal sovereign [King George III]. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his cruel ministry we will not tamely submit: appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free. . . .

We sincerely hope that the great Sovereign of the universe, who hath so often appeared for the English nation, will support you in every rational and manly exertion, with these colonies, for saving it from ruin; and that, in a consitutional connection with the mother-country, we shall soon be altogether a free and happy people.

“Per order:

“JOSEPH WARREN, *President, P. T.*”

Source: reprinted in *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers, 1758–1775*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1971.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened as the Regulars retreated to Boston?
2. Whose side of the events does Dr. Warren give? What do you think a Regular might have described?
3. To whom does Dr. Warren and the Provincial Congress say they are loyal? Why do you think they include this statement?
4. According to the Provincial Congress, what caused the hostilities of April 19? Who is to blame?
5. Does Dr. Warren and the Provincial Congress say they want to be independent from Great Britain?
6. What do they say they hope will be the result of this “address”?
7. What does this “address” tell us about the mood and thoughts of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress one week after the events of April 19, 1775?
8. Why do you think they wrote this?
9. On April 23rd, three days earlier, the Provincial Congress decided to immediately try to raise 30,000 men from across New England for a provincial army. How does that action fit with this “address” to people living in Great Britain?

(Footnotes)

¹ One woman, Hannah Adams, was forced from her bed and house with her 18-day-old baby

² Britain’s Parliament

PRIMARY SOURCE 5

TOTALS FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS TAX VALUATION LIST OF 1771 FOR ROXBURY

In 1771, the town of Roxbury, which included what is now Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury, and Mission Hill, had 327 individuals who owned property. Fifteen of them were women. The town included:

2,098 acres of pasture land
535 acres of tillage land
466 acres of saltmarsh
2 mills
90 tanneries, slaughterhouses, or shops—separate from their homes

The people kept:

289 horses
216 oxen
472 cattle
185 goats and sheep
152 pigs

Roxbury residents produced:

9,178 bushels of grain
1,215 barrels of cider

Source: The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771

PRIMARY SOURCE 6: EXCERPTS FROM ROXBURY'S TAX VALUATION LIST

NAME	PROPERTY VALUE	SERVANTS FOR LIFE	FARM ANIMALS	LAND IN ACRES	PRODUCTS ¹
Aaron Davis (elected to Provincial Congress in 1774)	£10 real estate; 1 separate bldg; vessel; £600 merchandise		2 horses, 1 cow	1 saltmarsh	2 tons hay
John Dowse	£12; £150 loaned out		1 horse, 2 oxen, 6 cows	15 pasture, 4 tillage, 6 salt-marsh, 11 mowing	80 grain 4 cider 12.5 tons hay
John Greaton, Jr. (General)	£180 in merchandise		1 horse		
Eliakim Hutchinson (Loyalist)	£41	1	6 horses, 2 oxen, 6 cows	33 pasture, 7 tillage, 27 salt-marsh, 30 mowing	140 grain 12 cider 31 tons hay
Joseph Mayo (selectman)	£17 real estate; 1 separate bldg; £30 in merchandise		4 horses, 2 oxen, 4 cows, 3 goats & sheep, 6 pigs	28 pasture, 8 tillage, 2 salt-marsh, 12 mowing, 8 fresh meadow	120 grain 60 cider 9.5 tons hay
William Pepperell	£21 £413 loaned out	3	2 horses, 4 oxen, 3 cows	35 pasture, 5 tillage, 17 mowing	90 grain 15 cider 10 tons hay
Nathaniel Ruggles (selectman)	£15 real estate; 1 separate bldg; £60 in merchandise; £200 loaned out		3 horses, 2 oxen, 2 cows	10 pasture, 6 tillage, 7.5 mowing, 2 fresh meadow	120 grain 7.5 tons hay
Rebecca Ruggles	£14	1	2 horses, 2 oxen, 2 cows	11 pasture, 2 tillage, 8 salt-marsh, 10 mowing	10 grain, 5 cider 15.5 tons hay

(Footnotes)

¹ Grain in bushels; cider in barrels

PRIMARY SOURCE 6: EXCERPTS FROM ROXBURY'S TAX VALUATION LIST

Dauid Weld	£6 real estate, 1 separate bldg, £6 merchandise; £75 loaned out	1	4 horses, 4 oxen, 10 cows, 5 goats & sheep, 3 pigs	2.5 pasture, 2.5 tillage, 5.5 salt-marsh, 5 mowing, 1 fresh meadow	20 grain 25 cider 7 tons hay
Eleazer Weld (selectman)	£15		2 horses, 2 oxen, 5 cows, 15 goats & sheep, 4 pigs	25 pasture, 5 tillage, 5 salt-marsh, 8 mowing, 10 fresh meadow	75 grain 30 cider 11 tons hay
Isaac Winslow (Loyalist)	£20 real estate, £9,948 loaned out		3 horses, 1 cow	8 pasture, 14 salt-marsh, 10 mowing	15 tons hay
Peter (free person of color)	12 shillings ¹ ; 1 separate building				

(Footnotes)

¹ A pound was 20 shillings;

a separate building could be a tannery, slaughter house or shop

PRIMARY SOURCE 7

Excerpts from “The Slave Trade is a spectacle that shocks Humanity!” printed in the *Boston Evening Post*, May 2, 1768

Roxbury (First Parish) April 15, 1768¹

The business of *making and keeping Slaves... for a long season among us, as a harmless and innocent practice*, will, notwithstanding, upon a strict and honest inquiry, be found, if I am not mistaken, directly contrary to *sacred scripture* and *solid reason*. It is certain, it must forever stand condemned, by that *eternal rule of righteousness* laid down... [that] *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*. i.e, whatever is fit, and just and reasonable, for us to desire and expect from other men, it is unquestionably our duty to act and behave in like manner with respect to them. ... And here I would ask the question, is it fit, just, or reasonable, that we, together with our wives and children, should be forcibly carried out of our land and *sold for slaves among the Negroes?* –if not—then neither is it fit, just, or reasonable that they should be treated in like manner by us. For it is a *certain everlasting truth*, that we have no more right to make slaves of any nation on the face of the earth, than another nation has to make slaves of us.

Every man that is born into the world, is *born free*, and cannot justly be made a slave, unless by *some act of his own*, he forfeits his liberty into the hands of public justice; I say *public justice*, because it is an affair of too great importance for persons in a *private capacity* to determine. ... We have been loudly complaining [to the British Parliament] of the *heavy burdens* cast upon us, and, that by the infringement of *our natural rights*, we are like to be reduced to a state of *slavery*. But with what face can we look up and plead for *these*, while we suffer so many of our *fellow creatures* to remain in the most abject slavery?

(Footnotes)

¹ The Reverend Amos Adams (1728–1775) was the minister at First Parish in Roxbury.

PRIMARY SOURCE 8

Diary of Samuel Bixby,¹ May 4, 1775–January 3, 1776

Samuel Bixby enlisted in Isaac Bolster's company in Sutton, Massachusetts on May 1st, 1775. He served for eight months.

Sutton, Mass., May 4, 1775.

Took our journey, and encamped this night at Sudbury.

May 5th Took our journey, & pitched our tents in Roxbury.

May 6th It is said the Regulars were about to make an attack somewhere; and about 6 o.c[lock] P.M. the Army was on the Grand parade. The Col[onel] ordered us to lie by our arms & ammunition all night. But there was no disturbance.

May 14th Last Sunday the Meeting House² was full of soldiers, and news came that the Regulars were landing on Dorchester Point. The General ordered the drums beat to arms, and as soon as the drums sounded, the soldiers were out of the Meeting House in the twinkling of an eye. We paraded, and marched to Dorchester Neck, as it was said the enemy was landing from the Castle. It proved to be a false alarm, and we returned to our quarters. We were ordered to lie by our arms through the night.

May 27th Saturday. About 200 men were detached to go to the Point to guard it. About 9 or 10 o.c. in the evening we heard the cannon roar, and the small arms crack for about an hour, in the direction of Marblehead or Medford, as we thought. We have since learnt that it was Col. Putman, & his men on Noddle's Island, where he engaged the Regulars, and took 300 sheep, and 200 lambs. One ship run aground, & they burnt it. He also took some cattle....

June 3rd Saturday. Drew provisions for Sunday; namely, Bread, Dry-fish, Potatoes, Butter, Rice, &c.

June 4th Sunday. Nothing remarkable.

June 5th Monday. This day is "Artillery Election;" but it was not much thought of by the soldiers. About 12 o.c. the Regulars fired from the Fortification; and they fired from the Castle at a party of our men on shore digging clams, but did no damage. Our men picked up one of the balls, a 24 pounder, and carried it to the General³, who gave them two gallons of rum. A party of our men out toward Noddle's Island captured a barge and four men belonging to a man of war, and carried it ashore at Cambridge, and this day brought the barge to Roxbury in a cart, with the sails up and three men in it. It was marched round the Meeting House, while the Engineer fired the Cannon for joy.

June 6th Tuesday. Orders to wash the floor of the Barracks, and clean out every hold and corner, and to sweep the yards. General Thomas and Heath went to Dorchester Point to view & lay out a place where to entrench, in order to storm the Castle. The Regulars fired three times at them with their Cannon, but did no harm. Our sentries stopped a team⁴ going into Boston with a load of hay. They threw the hay off, & found 2 calves, 32 watches, a great number of letters, some veal, several boxes butter, 2 bushels green peas, and some mutton....

(Footnotes)

¹ Samuel Bixby was in Isaac Bolster's Company, of Sutton, in Colonel Larned's Regiment. He enlisted May 1, 1775 to serve up to December 31, 1775.

² First Church

³ General Thomas or General Heath

⁴ A pair of oxen pulling a wagon

PRIMARY SOURCE 8

June 8th Thursday. A man to be whipped 20 lashes for stealing.

June 9th Friday. The man who was going into Boston with the hay &c. was tried by a Court Martial, and acquitted, as he proved not be a Tory.—...

June 13th General Court Martial. A man sentenced to 20 lashes and drummed out of camp for striking without cause, a soldier.—Eight ships sailed into Boston harbor today....

June 16th Friday. Firing by the Regulars in Boston. Went on the Grand parade, where about 300 men were drawn for the Point Piquet, and about 600 to entrench the piquet.

About 9 o.c. P.M. the Regulars in Boston fired an alarm, and rung the bells. We heard them drawing the carriages to the neck, & the riding of horses with great speed up to their guard and back into Boston, and there was great commotion there. It was supposed they were preparing to attack us in the morning, but no special orders were issued. The town seemed to be alive with men marching in all directions....

June 17th *Bixby first describes the Battle of Bunker Hill then continues:*

About noon we fired an alarm, & rung the bells in Roxbury; and every man was ordered to arms, as an attack was expected.

Col. Larned marched his regiment⁵ up to the Meeting House, & then to the burying yard, which was the alarm post, where we laid in ambush with two field pieces placed to give it to them unawares, should the Regulars come.

About 6 o.c. the enemy drew in their sentries, & immediately a heavy fire was opened from the Fortification. The balls whistled over our heads, & through the houses, making the clapboards and shingles fly in all directions.

Before the firing had begun, the General ordered some men down the street to fall some apple trees across the street, to hinder the approach of their Artillery.

Lieut[enant] Hazeltine packed up a 12 lbs ball—we were anxious to get their balls as though they were gold balls. The firing is still kept up at Charlestown & Cambridge. The enemy threw bomb-shells hourly into Roxbury during the night. Col. Larned ordered his Regiment to encamp in the safest place. Our company took cover behind a hill....

June 22nd Thursday. We are still entrenching here & in Cambridge, & making our position as strong and secure as we can. We have thrown up a strong work across the street, and also one across the road to Dorchester. The enemy has withdrawn the sentires to the Fortification.

Within three weeks 14 Ships have arrived in Boston harbor.

June 23rd Friday. Nothing new this day, unless it is new to dig graves. We see the Regulars, with the spy glass digging graves in Boston.—We are still building the Fort....

June 24th, 1775 Saturday *After describing several skirmishes and noting that two of their men were killed, Bixby writes* Two houses in Roxbury were set on fire.

June 25th Sunday. ... They lost several men....

(Footnotes)

⁴ A pair of oxen pulling a wagon

⁵ Samuel Bixby was a part of this regiment.

PRIMARY SOURCE 9

Excerpts from the journal of Samuel Haws, April 19, 1775–February 10, 1776

SAMUEL HAWS OF WRENTHAM WAS A MINUTEMAN. HE BEGINS HIS JOURNAL ON APRIL 19, 1775, WRITING,

About one a clock the minute men were alarmed and met at Landlord Moons¹. We marched from there the sun about half an our² high towards Roxbury.

He describes their long march with several stops and continues:

Then we marched to Jamicai plain³ their we heard that the regulars Were a coming over the neck⁴ then we striped of our coats and marched on with good courage to Colonel Williams and their we heard to the contrary. We staid their some time and refreshed our Selves and then marched to Roxbury parade and their we had as much Liquor as we wanted and every man drawd three Biscuit which were taken from the regulars the day before....

[April] 27. The inlistment came out to inlist men for the masechusetts Service. Some of our minute men enlisted the Same day [*but others returned home.*] on the same day their war [*were*] four tories caried throug roxbury to cambrigg from marshfield and their was a great Shouting when they came through the camp.

[April] 28. This day our regement paraded and went through the manuel exesise then we grounded our firelocks and every man set down by their arms and one abial Petty axedentely discharged his peace [*musket*] and shot two Balls through the Body of one asa cheany through his Left side and rite rist [*wrist*]

[April] 29 About nine o clock said cheney⁵ died....

[April] 30 Being the Lord's day we went to meeting⁶ and heard Mr. Adams⁷ and he preached a very Sutable Sermon for the ocation.

[May] 1. Nothing very remarkable this day.

[May] 2–11 Nothing of consequence happened.

[May] 12-14 No great for news.

[May] 15, 16 No news worth mentioning.⁸

[May] 30 Captain Ponds company moved to comodore Lorings house⁹....

[June] 9. We passed muster Before colonel Robinson and received one months pay.¹⁰

(Footnotes)

¹ Probably a tavern

² the spelling is left as in the original

³ Jamaica Plain, at that time a part of Roxbury

⁴ Narrow strip of land joining Boston to the mainland

⁵ Asa Cheany shot on the 28th

⁶ church

⁷ The Rev. Amos Adams was the minister at Firsh Parish in Roxbury.

⁸ Between April 19, 1775 and February 10, 1776, when the journal ends, Haws wrote entries such as these 114 times. In several instances, the note covers more than one day. September 1775 is the only period when he didn't write "nothing happened." In January 1776, he wrote it 21 times.

⁹ Probably Joshua Loring's house; Loring was a Loyalist

¹⁰ Colonel John Robinson commanded the detachment that guarded Boston Neck.

PRIMARY SOURCE 9

[June] 10 Their was a man Whiped for Stealing.

[June] 11 Their was a soldier died at the hospittle which was the first that had died of Sickness since we incampt...

[July 10] [At] night [it] being clear [our men] set out for Long Island [in whale boats] and arived there in a Short time and then they Plundered the island and took from thence 19 head of horned cattle and a number of Sheep and three Swine also eighteen priseners and amongst them were three women.

[July] 12 [Soldiers went] to Long island to burn the Buildings their when they were attacked by the Kings troops and had a smart engagement but we Lost one man...

[July] 25 Our Regiment with four more were under arms and marched towards cambridge to meet general Ward...

[July] 31 This day major tupper and his men returned to Roxbury with between thirty and forty prisoners some regulars and some torys and some mariens [*marines*] and had something of a battle and we lost one man and another wounded and our men Burnt the Light house and took some plunder[.] thar was an alarm [.] the firing began first at the floating Battery¹¹ and then at the Brest Work [breastwork] and then the troops marched out and set the george tavern¹² on fire[.] our men took one prisoner and the same night one of the enemy deserted and came to our centrys at Dorchester point and brought away with him too [2] guns and too cartridg Boxes and 60 rounds of cartridgs all in good order and their was several more deserted to cambridg the same night...

[August] 11 Their was three men whipt for deserting they were whipt ten stripes apiece they belonged to the conecticut forces....

[August] 15 Two Oclock this Afternoon when the Lobsters¹³ fired on our guards which was returned by our Roxbury fort[.] the fireing was continued for some time but how much to their Damag we don't know[.] one of our men was slitley wounded[.] their fireing was from a floating Batery and it is thought would have killed one or too men if they had not have Lain down[.] for the Ball passed within about 4 foot of our Barack[.] the night passed without any alarm....

Source: *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers, 1758–1775*. compiled by Abraham Tomlinson and published in 1855. Reprinted by Da Capo Press, 1971.

(Footnotes)

¹¹ guns, such as cannon, placed on a floating platform

¹² on a part of the Neck closest to Roxbury

¹³ slang for the Regulars or Redcoats

PRIMARY SOURCE 10

A description of Roxbury in October 1775

On October 20, 1775, Dr. Belknap visited the lines at Roxbury and wrote:

Nothing strikes me with more horror than the present condition of Roxbury: that once busy, crowded street is now occupied by a picket guard. The houses are deserted, the windows taken out, and many shot-holes visible; some have been burnt, and others pulled down, to make room for the fortifications. A wall of earth is carried across the street to William's old house, where there is a formidable fort mounted with cannon. The lower line is just below where the George Tavern stood; a row of trees, root and branch, lies across the road there, and the breastworks extends to Lamb's Dam, which makes a part thereof. I went round the whole and was so near the enemy as to see them (though it was foggy and rainy) relieve their sentries, which they do every hour.

Source: quoted in Frothingham, Richard. *The History of the Siege of Boston*. The Scholars Bookshelf edition, 2005, p.269.

PRIMARY SOURCE 11

ORDER FROM MAJOR GENERAL WARD TO BRIGADIER GENERAL THOMAS

Camp @ Roxbury 4 March, 1776

Brigadier general Thomas is to take command of 2100 men which are to be paraded @ Dorchester @ six o'clock this evening, with which he is to proceed to Dorchester Point and there throw up such works on the two commanding eminences, as with the advice of the engineer shall think most proper for the defense of the ground and annoyance of the enemy and defend the same.

By order of Major General Ward

Joseph Ward
Aide de camp

PRIMARY SOURCE 12

LETTER FROM GENERAL JOHN THOMAS TO HIS WIFE, MARCH 9, 1776

Dear Mrs. Thomas

We have for some time been preparing to take possession of Dorchester Point, and last Monday night about 7 o'clock, I marched with about 3,000 picked men, beside 360 ox teams and some pieces of artillery. Two companies of the train of teams were laden with materials for our works. About 8 o'clock we ascended the high hills and by daylight got two hills defensible.

About sunrise the enemy and others in Boston appeared numerous on the tops of houses and on the wharfs viewing us with astonishment, for our appearance was unexpected to them. The cannonading which kept up all night from our lines at Lamb's Dam and from the enemy's lines, likewise at Lechmere Point, now ceased from those quarters, and the enemy turned their fire toward us on the hills, but they soon found it was to little effect.

About 10 o'clock we discovered large bodies of troops embarking in boats with their artillery, which made a formidable appearance. After some time they were put on board transports and several of the ships came down near the castle, as we supposed with a design to land on our shore.

Our people appeared in good spirits to receive them. We were now in a good position of defense, and had 2,000 men added to our number. The enemy viewed us critically, and we remained in that situation that night. The next day they came to sail, and returned to town and landed these troops. On Friday, about 2 o'clock pm, they sent a flag of truce with a paper, a copy of which I have enclosed.

I have had very little sleep or rest this week, being closely employed ay and night. But now I think we are well secured. I write in haste, thinking you may be anxious to hear, as there is much firing this way. We cost but two men killed in all this affair. How things are in Boston or what loss they have sustained from our shots and shells, at present we are not informed, but I am sensible we distressed them much, from appearances. I have wrote you enclosed by the same hand and in haste.

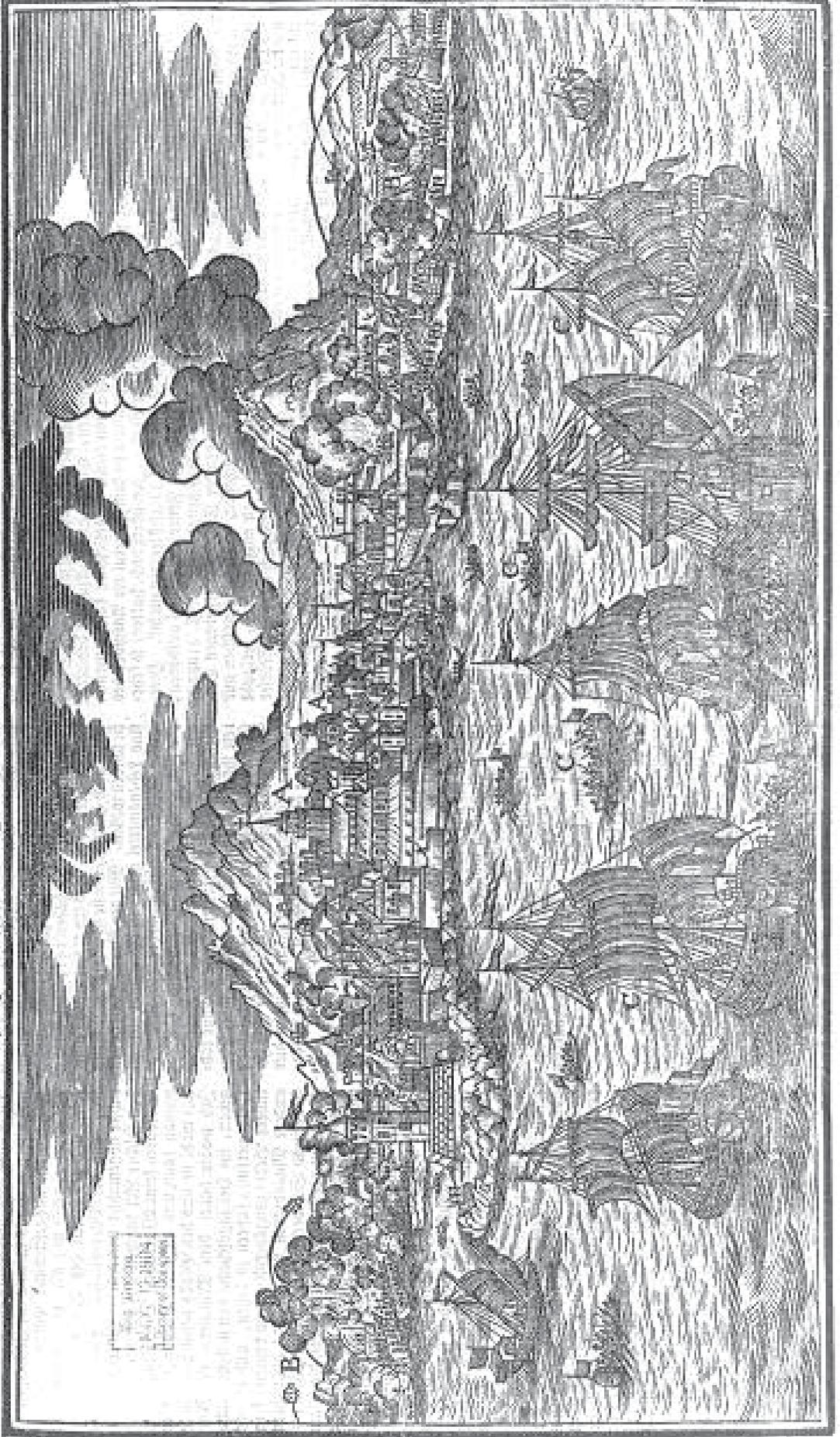
John Thomas

Dorchester Hills, in a small hut, March 9, 1776

Your son John is well and in high spirits. He ran away from Oakley privately, on Tuesday morning and got by the sentries and came to me on Dorchester Hills, where he has been most of the time..

PRIMARY SOURCE 13: EVACUATION OF BOSTON

Stichtige Abbildung der von den einseitigen Provinzialen besetzten Hauptstadt und Festung Boston in Amerika, im Monat OCTOBER 1776.



SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

ROXBURY DURING THE SIEGE OF BOSTON

APRIL 1775–MARCH 1776

APRIL 19, 1775

Tensions between people living in Massachusetts and other British colonies in North America and the British Parliament had been escalating for years. April 19, 1775, Regulars under orders from General Gage (governor of Massachusetts) marched through Cambridge and Lexington (where they exchanged fire with Minutemen) into Concord, where they knew military supplies were stored. They didn't have much luck destroying the supplies because a few days before, the provincials had gotten word that the Regulars were planning to come and had moved most of the stores out of Concord. More gunfire was exchanged between Minutemen and Regulars at the North Bridge in Concord in the morning of April 19. Finally, hours later, exhausted, the Regulars began the long march back to Boston.

Meanwhile word had quickly spread in dozens of town about the actions of the Regulars. As they tried to get back to Boston, the Regulars were shot at by scores of provincial men. After reinforcements came from Boston, the Regulars increased their attacks on homes from which they believed they were being fired at. Eventually, they got back to Charlestown. Several days later, they left Charlestown for Boston. As a result of the fighting on April 19, 73 Regulars died, 174 were wounded, and 26 were missing. Of the provincials, 49 men died, 39 were wounded, and 4 were missing.

NOW WHAT?

The Provincial Congress decided to restrict the Regulars to the peninsula of Boston. On April 23, 1775, they put into action plans they had made earlier for a provincial army. They recommended that 30,000 men from across New England be called to serve in this new army. They also named Artemas Ward as commander of all Massachusetts troops.

ROXBURY'S EARLY HISTORY

What we now know as Roxbury was once the land of the Massachusett people; their sachem in the early 1600s was Chicatabut. A number of main Indian trails ran through Roxbury since it served as a link between inland and coastal areas. It is quite likely that the area had many seasonal settlements, but no sites have been found. They were probably destroyed by intense urban development.

In 1630 Roxbury was settled and incorporated as a town by English colonists (at the same time as towns such as Boston, Braintree, Salem, and Watertown). That makes it one of the oldest towns in Massachusetts and hence the United States. In the 1700s, it still included the neighborhoods of Mission Hill, West Roxbury and Jamaica Plain and was very large: eight miles by two miles, an area of 10,686 acres. The population of Roxbury in 1765 was 1,493, including 80 black people.

Roxbury was incorporated as a city in 1846 and in 1868 was annexed to Boston, ending its 238-year history as an independent town.

WHO WERE THE ENSLAVED?

A fundamental contradiction lies at the heart of the American Revolution and the republic that was created after the war. Slavery was legal in every single one of the thirteen colonies. A number of the men who fought for their own "liberty" were slaveowners themselves. Dr. Joseph Warren owned a slave. General John Thomas owned a slave. General George Washington owned hundreds.

The total number of enslaved individuals listed on Roxbury's Tax Valuation List of 1771 is 22. This number includes "all Indian, Negro, or mulatto servants for life"—men and women—ages 14 to 45. The full number was definitely higher because older and younger individuals were not counted for tax purposes. Also, several families owned properties in Boston and Roxbury, and they and their slaves are listed in Boston's records. "Peter" is the only free black listed; he appears at the end. However, there were additional free black men and women living in Roxbury in the 1770s. For example, records show the marriages of four couples, but they would not have been listed in the Tax Valuation list if they didn't own property and didn't have to pay taxes.

The total number of enslaved individuals listed in Boston (in 1771) was 325; it was the largest slave-owning town in Massachusetts. The number of free black taxpayers in Boston was 4. The 1776 census showed 5,249 enslaved individuals in Massachusetts.

However, there were also men and women, black and white, who spoke out against slavery. Among them was the Reverend Amos Adams of the First Parish in Roxbury.

ROXBURY DURING THE SIEGE

General John Thomas was in command of the men in Roxbury. He used the parsonage—what is now known as the Dillaway Thomas House—as his headquarters. More than half of the Massachusetts men serving had participated in the events of April 19. The rest were new recruits. The Rhode Island Assembly voted to send 1,500 men under General Nathanael Greene. New Hampshire voted to send 2,000, and from Connecticut 6,000 men marched to join the siege. We know that black men and Native Americans were among the soldiers in the army; research is ongoing so we can learn how many served in the siege and who they were. By early June, 16,000 enlisted provincials encircled Boston and General Howe's 6,500 Regulars.

THE LOYALISTS

A number of individuals loyal to Great Britain's king and parliament lived in Roxbury, as they did in every town in Massachusetts. They were known as Loyalists or Tories. Many left their homes and fled to Boston after April 19. During the siege, some of their homes were used by the Continental Army. For example, General Greene of RI used Joshua Loring's property as his headquarters; later the house became an army hospital. Colonel Learned's regiment stayed in Judge Robert Auchmuty's home; he, too was a Loyalist. Both these properties were among the ones permanently confiscated in 1779.

GENERAL WASHINGTON ARRIVES

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, chose General George Washington as commander in chief of the Continental Army. He arrived in Cambridge July 2 and first visited the Roxbury camp on July 13. General Washington was taking command of men with little training and knowledge of military life and few supplies. Another huge challenge that he faced was that the men had enlisted to serve only until the end of 1775. At the end of November, the general wrote to his friend, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Reed: "Could I foreseen what I have, and am likely to experience, no consideration upon Earth should have induced me to accept this Command." Despite all the difficulties, the Continentals managed to pull it off. Some soldiers stayed on and new recruits came in January and February so that by March, the army again had about 16,000 men.

In the middle of February 1776, with the Back Bay area of Boston frozen, General Washington wanted to attack the Regulars to drive them out of Boston. His generals, however, opposed the plan and suggested something else, taking advantage of the cannon that Henry Knox and his men had just dragged to Cambridge all the way from Fort Ticonderoga (see the related Mass Moment in Further Resources below).

THE EVACUATION

The Regulars under command of General Howe considered attacking Dorchester Heights to dislodge the Continental troops. Bad weather prevented this. By the middle of March, they concluded that they had no choice but to leave. The artillery on Dorchester Heights threatened the British navy vessels in Boston Harbor. The Regulars began to load the ships preparing to leave. On March 17, 1776, about 11,000 British army and navy personnel and almost 1,000 Loyalists sailed out of Boston Harbor.

THE SIEGE REMEMBERED

To celebrate their remarkable victory, Americans immediately printed and distributed broadsides. In time they wrote songs, created commemorative medals, put on plays, and held ceremonies. Every year, Suffolk County, which includes Boston, celebrates March 17 as Evacuation Day.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Instructions for Making Big Maps

The technique described here empowers students to seek out and demonstrate geographic knowledge on a large outline map traced onto paper or a foam-core board using a transparency on an overhead projector. This method motivates students to learn and then remember geographic information because they find it and use it.

Use an outline map of the greater Boston area as it appeared in the 18th century, including major rivers but leaving out all names of places. Students will use information from the DeCosta map of 1775 and will transfer this onto both their own maps and the enlarged class Big Map.

Developing the map as the lesson progresses:

Students can add to a base map throughout the unit with new information from their discussions and readings. They may want to print images from websites and attach them to appropriate places on the map. Color-coded keys can be simple or complex, depending on the age of the students.

Students develop a strong sense of ownership in their creations that, once completed, make an impressive statement in school corridors, libraries, entryways or cafeterias. Big Maps also provide an impressive tool for authentic assessment especially when students ‘tell the stories of what they have learned’ to peers or adults.

Materials required:

- Overhead projector(s)
- Transparency acetate, 8 1/2" x 11", which can be fed through a copy machine (available at office supply stores)
- A simple outline map of the area under study with rivers and major roads but no writing on it
- Thick permanent markers
- A large (minimum 3' x 4') piece of butcher paper (or four pieces of chart paper taped together on the back) taped to a smooth wall. The larger the map, the more engaging it is for students. Foam-core board or cardboard are good for making relief maps which must be laid flat after the outline has been traced.

A. Prepare a transparency for the overhead projector:

Use the outline map of greater Boston in 1775 with no writing on the map. Place the outline map on a copy machine and run a sheet of transparency acetate through the machine as if it was ordinary paper. The traced image will appear on the acetate exactly like a xerox copy.

B. Before students arrive in class:

Tape a large (minimum 3' x 4') piece of butcher paper onto a smooth wall. (Wrinkles result in inaccuracies right from the beginning.) Alternatively, use a flat piece of cardboard or foam-core board suspended vertically against a hard surface.

Using the overhead projector, focus the transparency on the paper. Adjust the projector until the map fills the entire space. Tape the transparency to the surface of the projector and place the projector on a chair. It is essential that this arrangement not be inadvertently moved once the students begin to trace the image onto the butcher paper

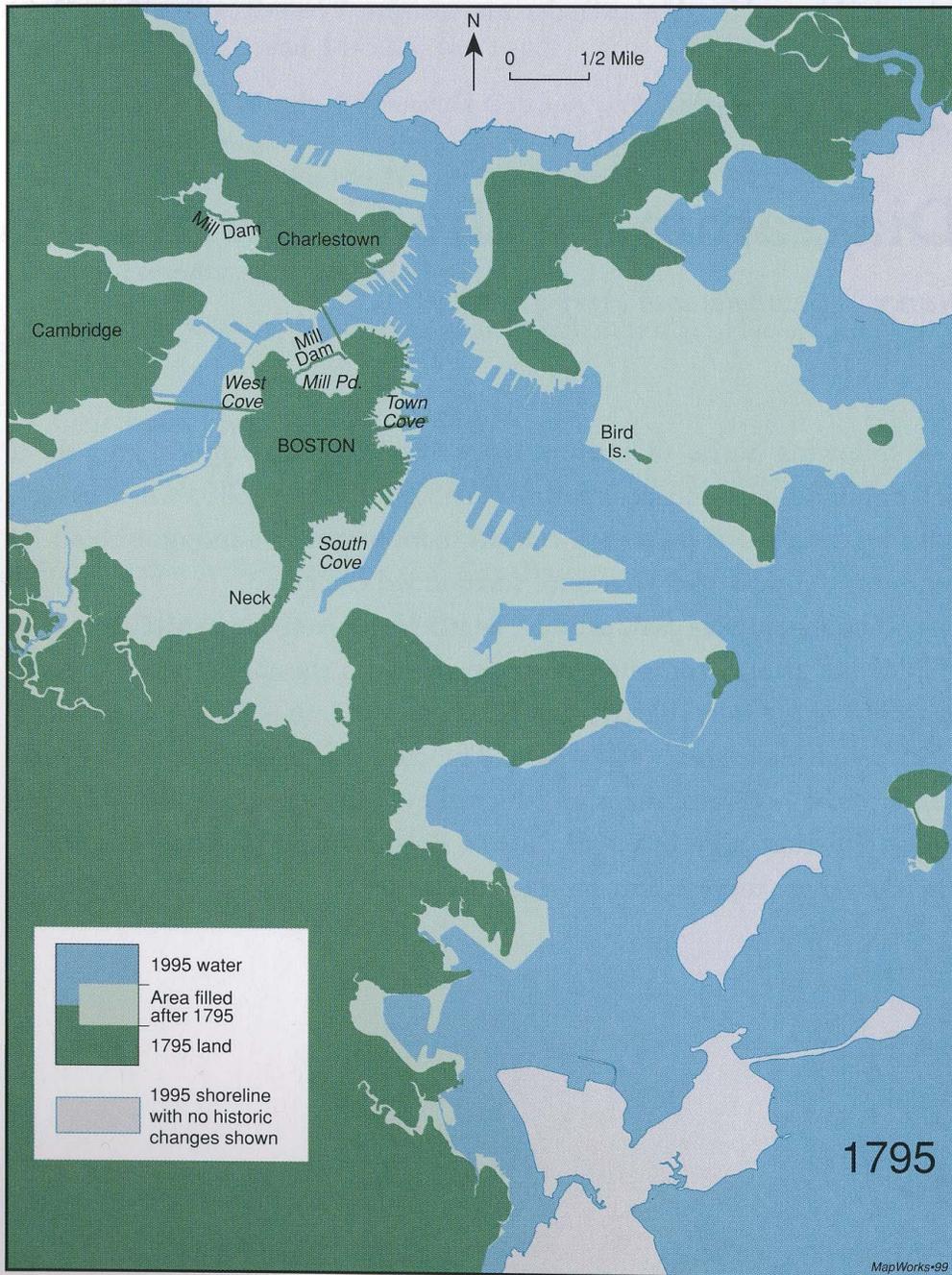
because it is very hard to reposition the image once it has been disturbed. Tracing the corners of the transparency onto the butcher paper can help to realign the image if it gets knocked out of place.

C. Students trace the big map onto paper or board with permanent markers:

While the class completes an assignment using 8 1/2"x11" copies of the map, allow two or three students at a time to begin tracing the outline map with the permanent marker. Tracing the whole outline should take no more than 20-30 minutes. All students should have at least one minute of tracing time. The result is a template onto which students can add features (names of places, action of April 19, 1775, later the position of provincial troops and events throughout the siege). As they learn about them, so that the Big Map grows richer and more complete as the unit progresses.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Boston showing landfill areas 1795

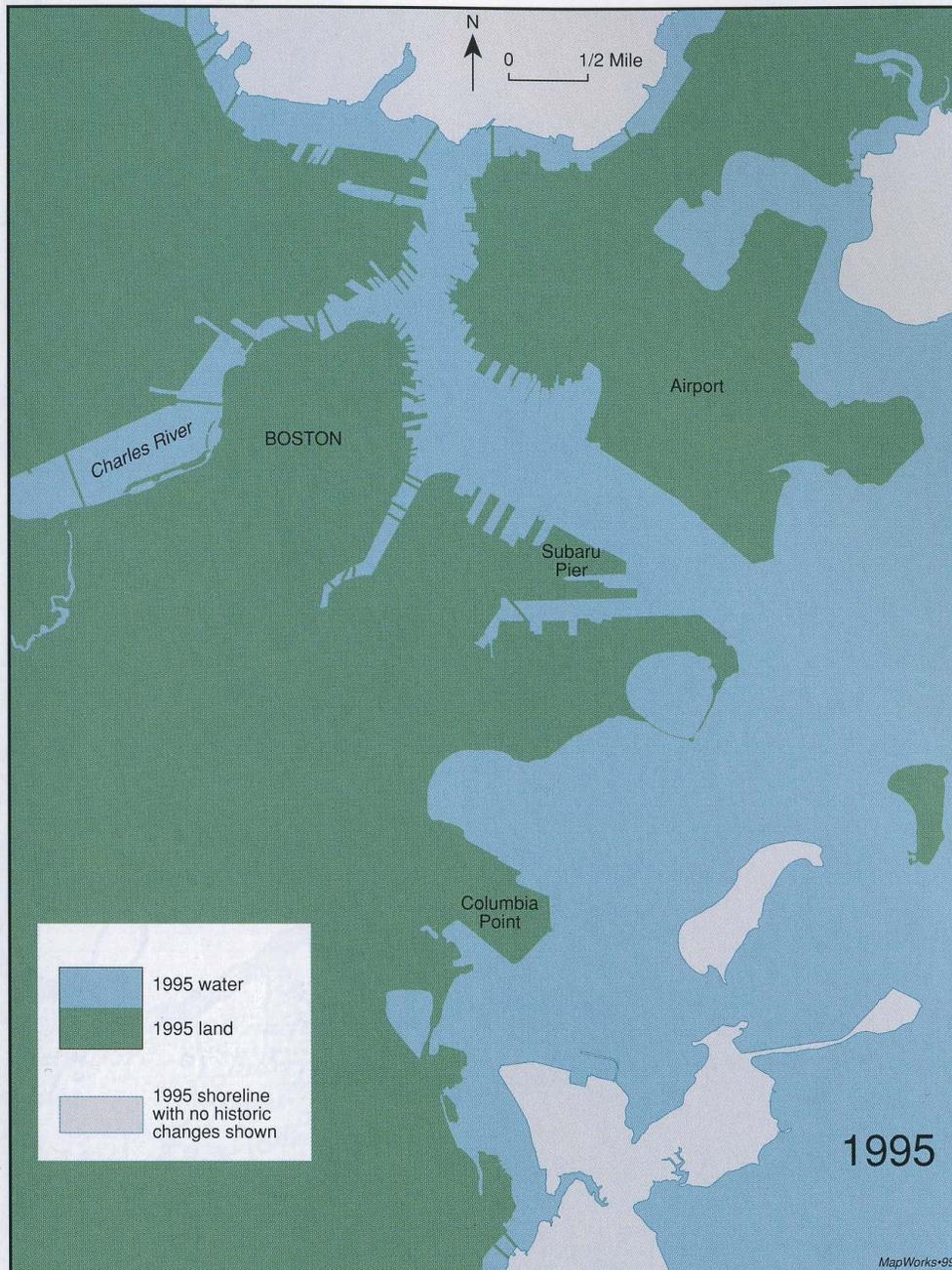


By 1795 the area of the Boston peninsula had been increased, primarily by “wharfing out”—the process of constructing wharves outward from the shore and later filling the slips between them. Wharfing out also added land to the southwestern shore of the Charlestown peninsula. Mill dams had been built across the North, or Mill, Cove on the Boston peninsula and the head of the cove between Charlestown and what is now Somerville. Two new bridges connected the Boston peninsula to Charlestown and to Cambridge. In the harbor, erosion had claimed most of Bird Island.

The 1795 shoreline of Boston is taken from the 1796 Carleton (plate 31) and of Charlestown from the 1777 Page (plate 17 vignette).

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Boston showing landfill areas 1995



By 1995 the shoreline of Boston had reached its present extent. Since 1950 more land had been made for the airport; the navy's piers on the South Boston Flats had been filled in to create Subaru Pier; the edges of Columbia Point had been filled in for the Columbia Point housing project, JFK Library, UMass/Boston, and Boston College High School; South Bay had finally been completely filled; new land had been created on the Charles River to compensate for that taken for the construction of Storow Drive; and Spectacle Island was being filled with dirt from the "Big Dig" (see figure 35 in chapter 8).

The 1995 shoreline is taken from a 1995 aerial photograph.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

QUESTIONS FOR SAMUEL BIXBY'S AND SAMUEL HAW'S DIARIES

1. How far did the soldier have to march from home to Roxbury? Did they reach Roxbury in one day? If not, how long did it take?
2. What do you learn about the day-to-day life of a soldier camped in Roxbury during the siege?
3. What do you learn about the relationship between the Regulars in Boston and the Continental Army stationed around Boston?
4. Why did men go out to the Boston islands to get animals?
5. (Bixby, June 6) Why was the hay wagon stopped from going into Boston? What happened to the man trying to take the wagon into Boston?
6. On a number of days, the soldiers write that nothing happened. How do you think they spent their time? Why might it be a problem if many days in a row nothing happened?
7. What did the Continental Army do to protect itself from the Regulars?
8. What were some of the offenses soldiers committed and how were they punished?
9. What kind of damage was done to Roxbury properties? Who caused the damage?
10. What surprises you about the journal entries? What would you like to know more about and how can you find answers to your questions?

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

BIOGRAPHIES

THE REVEREND AMOS ADAMS was born in Medfield on September 1, 1728. His father was a selectman in town and was also a distant cousin of Samuel Adams and John Adams. He graduated from Harvard College and in February 1753 was asked to be the minister at the First Parish in Roxbury. The First Parish was considered one of the most important parishes in colonial New England, so this was a very prestigious position. In the fall of 1753, he married Elizabeth Henry of Cambridge and moved into the parsonage, now known as the Dillaway Thomas House. Because he was the pastor at First Parish, he also had many other important positions, including as Overseer of Harvard College. His congregation liked and respected him, but some people complained his sermons were too long and the way he spoke too dull.

Reverend Adams read widely, supported the abolition of slavery (see Primary Source 7), and the colonists efforts against “tyranny. When the First Parish met to choose officers for the Roxbury Minutemen, the Rev. Adams opened the meeting with a prayer. When the siege of Boston began, the reverend moved his family and the parish silver to Medfield. He came back to Roxbury to continue his work as minister to the town and the troops.

His personal life included several tragedies. His firstborn son died when he was six after being badly burned. The reverend’s first and second wives died, too. Amos Adams died in Dorchester, October 5, 1775 mid way through the siege and was buried in Roxbury.

EBENEZER FOX was born in Roxbury January 30, 1763 to a poor family. By the age of seven, his parents did what most poor families did, they sent Ebenezer to live and work on a neighbor’s farm. He stayed there for five years and he did not like it. Later he worked as an apprentice to a barber who also made wigs. When the barber was drafted to serve in the Continental Army but didn’t want to go, Ebenezer took his place. This was not unusual. Ebenezer served in New York state for two months until he was discharged.

In March 1780, he signed up as a crew member of a privateering vessel, *Protector*. Privateers were essentially legal pirates. They tried to stop British vessels from reaching the North American colonies and supplying their troops. If a privateering crew could take over a British ship, then they had the right to divide up the cargo amongst themselves. But it was dangerous work. The British had the best navy in the world. *Protector* had some successes and some failures. In May 1781, the British captured *Protector*, and sent Ebenezer to be held on the prison ship *Jersey*. Conditions for the approximately 1,000 prisoners on board the *Jersey* were awful. Ebenezer believed he would either die on the prison ship or be forced to serve as a British sailor, so instead he volunteered. He was sent to Jamaica but managed to escape in July 1782. He had more adventures before he finally got back to Boston in May 1783. A few years later, he opened his own crockery, glass and hardware shop in Roxbury. From 1831–1835 he was postmaster in town. He died in Roxbury in 1843, at age 80.

GENERAL JOHN GREATON was born in Roxbury March 10, 1741. His father owned a small shop and was also the last landlord of the famous Greyhound Tavern in Roxbury. John Greaton joined the Sons of Liberty and was active in pre-Revolutionary work. He was chosen as colonel of one of the regiments of Roxbury Minutemen, and he was involved in the events of April 19 as the Regulars retreated from Concord to Boston. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel and then July 1, 1775 to colonel. During the siege, he led several raids on places where the Regulars had stores. After the siege ended, Greaton served in the Continental Army in many different places and his rank rose steadily. In January 1783 Congress appointed him brigadier general. He retired in November of 1783 and died just a few weeks later back in Roxbury on December 16, 1783.

JOSHUA LORING was born in Roxbury November 1, 1744. He served in the British army for four years as a young man. Throughout the pre-Revolutionary activities, he supported the royal governor and Britain's Parliament. He was so sure they would stay in charge of the colonies that in 1775 he paid more than 500 (more than \$100,000 in today's money) to buy the position of sheriff of Suffolk County. On April 19, 1775 he, his wife, and six children fled from Roxbury to Boston. After the evacuation March 17, 1776, the Loring family first went to Nova Scotia and then to New York. New York was under the control of British General Sir William Howe.

In June 1776, General Howe appointed Joshua Loring to be in charge of all the American prisoners of war. We cannot be sure exactly what the truth is about how Loring did his job. One former prisoner called him a "monster." A British general accused him of charging the government for food for dead prisoners and then pocketing the money. Others believe he performed his job in a professional manner. He was in charge of all prisoners and for arranging prisoner exchanges until the end of the Revolutionary War. In November 1782 he left for England.

Meanwhile, shortly after he left Roxbury, his property was used as the headquarters for Rhode Island's General Greene. Later the house was used as an army hospital. In April 1779, Massachusetts voted to confiscate the property of certain Loyalists (or Tories). Loring lost his 73-acre property and the two "mansion houses" that were on it. When he was in England, Loring tried to payment for the property he'd lost. (He also had 20,000 acres in New Hampshire.) But he got only a part of its value. He died in England in September 1789.

GENERAL JOHN THOMAS was born in Marshfield in 1724. He was among many who studied medicine under Dr. Simon Tufts in Medford. He served in the French and Indian wars. He began as a surgeon's mate and rose to colonel. From 1760 to 1775, he was a doctor in Kingston, Massachusetts. In the pre-Revolutionary activities, he joined the Sons of Liberty.

In May 1775, the Provincial Congress named Thomas lieutenant general. He was second in command of all Massachusetts troops and in command of the right wing of the army, which was at Roxbury. A short time later, the Continental Congress made him brigadier general. While in Roxbury, General Thomas made the parsonage, now known as the Thomas Dillaway House, his headquarters. A man by the name of Oakley was with the general in Roxbury. It is possible that he was the general's slave. General Thomas's 10-year-old son joined him, too.

General Washington chose Thomas to occupy Dorchester Heights in early March 1776. He did the job so well that he was immediately promoted to major general, and General Howe and the Regulars left Boston ten days later. General Thomas was ordered north to Canada to take command of the Continental Army around Quebec. He left Roxbury March 22, 1776. Along with many of his soldiers, he came down with smallpox and died June 2, 1776.

DR. JOSEPH WARREN was born in Roxbury June 11, 1741. His father, a farmer, died after falling from an apple tree when Joseph was 14 years old. Joseph graduated from Harvard College in 1759 and taught at the Roxbury elementary school for a year. Then he began an apprenticeship with another doctor and went on to have a very successful career in Boston. John Adams was among his patients. He became very involved in the activities leading to the Revolution. He worked closely with Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and James Otis, wrote in publications, and was a good public speaker. In 1771, at the same time as he was writing and speaking about liberty, he was a slaveowner. He was not at the time of his death.

On April 18, it was Joseph Warren who sent Paul Revere and William Dawes on their famous rides to spread the alarm. The next day he treated wounded Minutemen in Lexington and helped direct the militia. A few days later was chosen as president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, in which he'd been an elected member since 1774. In May, he also became head of the committee to organize the army in Massachusetts. He worked very hard to change the farmer-soldiers, who had almost no fighting experience, into an army that could keep the Regulars under siege in Boston. He was not one to sit on the sidelines while others did the fighting. Several times he went along with provincial troops into skirmishes with the Regulars. After meeting with the Provincial Congress in Watertown the night of June 16, he went to Bunker Hill the next day just as the battle was about to

start. Toward the end of the battle, he was shot and died instantly. He was among 140 colonists who died at the battle. The Regulars lost 226 men.

Sources:

Amos Adams from *Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Volume XIII 1751–1755: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College*, by Lifford K. Shipton. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1965.

Ebenezer Fox told his life story to his grandchildren. It was published as *The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox of Roxbury, Massachusetts*. Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1838.

John Greaton from Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Joshua Loring from Gale Virtual Reference Library; *American National Biography*, Vol. 22. Oxford University Press, 1999.

John Thomas from *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* by Mark Maho Boatner III. David McKay Co., Inc., 1974; Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Joseph Warren from *The Memorial History of Boston* by Francis Drake; Gale Virtual Reference Library; *American National Biography*, Vol. 13. Oxford University Press, 1999.

At the present time, we do not know enough about any one of the black people—free or enslaved—who lived in Roxbury in the 18th century to create a short biography. Official records have only bits of information, and people of color often don't appear in town records at all. When black children were born, for example, this was not recorded in town records. When a black person died, that usually didn't get recorded either. Discuss in class what this tells us about the lives of black people in the 18th century?

Students can choose any one of the people below, and as they create a character, try to fill in what we don't know about the individual's life by looking at the lives of other people of color to get ideas.

Jack, enslaved by John Mory, married **Zipporah**, enslaved by William Dummer, in 1754. **Phillis Lewis**, also identified as “a slave in the family of Mr. Mory before the Revolution,” died in an almshouse in 1843. Her estimated age was 100. (Unclear why the 1771 tax list only lists one slave. Perhaps Jack had died.) In 1785 John Mory sold a five-year old “Molatto Boy...name of **Dick** who was born in my house of my Negro servant Binah...” for 5 to Stoddard Greenough of Roxbury. The next year, under the supervision of the selectmen, Dick was apprenticed to Greenough until he was to turn 21.

Ishmael and **Venus**, enslaved by Joseph Ruggles and after his death in 1765 the property of his widow Rebecca Ruggles, had their

Son **Richard** baptised in Oct 1764

Son **Roxbury** baptised May 1766

1771 tax list show Rebecca Ruggles as owning one slave. It would appear that either Ishmael or Venus died or she may have sold either one. It is unlikely that either freed him or herself by running away since family ties were among the top reasons enslaved people did not run away. Both children were too young to be listed in tax list.

August 31, 1749 Runaway Advertisement:

“RAN-away on the 29th of August, from his Master John Williams of Roxbury, a Negro Man Servant, named **Sharper**, a lusty Fellow about 35 Years of Age, speaks good English, and is something Battle-harmed: He had on when he went away, a check'd Woolen Shirt, a pair of white Towsers, a pair of grey yarn Stocking, a pair of calf skin Shoes, with large pewter Buckles, a strip'd blue and white Jacket, a small beaver Hatt, and the Wool on the Top of his Head newly sheared ; he also carried away with him a dark blue Jacket, worsted Stockings, and a pair of yarn Stockings, black and white, stock'd with grey a little above his Shoes. Whoever takes up said Servant, and conveys him to said Master at Roxbury, shall have Five Pounds old Tenor Reward, and all necessary Charges paid by me John Williams.”

Peter and **Betty** baptised [no mention in the records of either being enslaved by anyone]

Daughter **Phoebe** Nov 1744

Son **Peter** July 1754 (This may be the Peter who owns a shop in 1771.)

Son **Simon**, April 1759

Cuffee Lucee and **Grace** were the slaves of the Rev. Nathaniel Walter; they were married Oct 1745.

Sons **Cesar** and **Cuffee** and daughters **Phillis** and **Zipporah*** were baptised Nov 1749 (did this Zipporah later marry Cato and baptised their children in 1771?)

Son Charles bp April 1755

Cato and ***Zipporah** were married in 1770 [no mention of enslavement in the records] had two sons **Cato** and **Cesar**, and daughter **Phillis** baptised March 30, 1771

Boston Jack Adams of Roxbury, 5 ft. 5 inches, whose occupation is listed as a farmer, was 22 when he enlisted in the Continental Army April 12, 1782. He joined Capt King's company in Lt. Col John Brooks's 7th regiment. (*Massachusetts Soldiers & Sailors*)

Sources: the Vital Records of Roxbury, MA to 1849; the 1771 Tax Valuation List; databases at the New England Historic Genealogical Society; Thwing Database, and *History of the First Church in Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1630–1904*.